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GUEST COMMENTARY

Print Page

No Regrets For A Racist (?) 'Choice Of Words'

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We may be certain that due to their rich experience of privilege and denial, White male pundits, be they of liberal or conservative persuasion, will never regret or even acknowledge their own racist "choice of words" when commenting on Supreme Court nominee Judge Sonia Sotomayor's 2001 speech.

As a case in point, take the opening paragraph of the front-page Washington Post article headlined "Obama Says Judge Regrets Wording" (Saturday, May 30, 2009). The article's biased "choice of words" presents the phrase "wise Latina" out of the context of Sotomayor's caveat "I would hope" and places the word "often" out of the context of Sotomayor's caveat "more often than not." This provides the pretext for "White male" pundits to charge that Sotomayor's "choice of words" is racist, when in reality the term "racist" better describes their own "choice of words."

A racist would not provide caveats when expounding on racial superiority. A racist does not simply "hope" to make better decisions than would another race. It is presumed that such is the case. For a racist, "a better conclusion" would not be rendered "more often than not." It would be the unavoidable outcome of racial superiority. The institutionalized racism in media reports represents the irrational bias of "White male" pundits that has prevailed over the rational "choice of words" in Sotomayor's 2001 speech.

The Washington Post's selective paraphrase reads as follows:

"President Obama said yesterday that Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor regrets her choice of words in a 2001 speech in which she said a "wise Latina" judge would often make better decisions than a White male."

Sotomayor's "choice of words" in context reads:

"I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a White male who hasn't lived that life."

It is the ultimate sexism to assert that the experience of women does not offer better insight into the problems of women than does the experience of men, particularly when the statement is qualified by the phrase "more often than not." Similarly, it is the ultimate racism to assert that it is racist to suggest that the experience of the victims of White supremacy, in a nation founded on White male supremacy, may "more often than not" provide better insights into the nature of racism in America and "reach a better conclusion" than what is provided from the experience of being a White male. It is the ultimate racist and sexist mentality to insist that the White male's intellect is so superior that his racially privileged experience is no handicap in rendering justice and that there is no advantage in the experience of women and non-Whites when rendering judgments on the issues of sexism or racism in our society.

To the White male, any consideration of gender or racial "diversity" is reverse sexism and reverse racism. The political power of this fanciful and irrational racial assault by White male pundits has actually pressured an African-American president to declare that his Latina Supreme Court nominee regrets her "choice of words."

The controversy over the role that life experience offers to judicial insight arose a few years ago over the nomination of Supreme Court nominee John G. Roberts. The self-righteous, bi-partisan liberal and conservative media pundits rebuked veteran civil rights leaders John Lewis and Wade Henderson for their characterization of the "indisputably qualified conservative" Roberts as a pre-Brown v. Board of Education justice. The media reaction at the time made it clear that many White male pundits, regardless of political persuasion, just didn't get it.

Their paternalistic rebukes represented a belief in a race so inherently rational that fairness was assumed even where prejudice was evident. It was such a faith that moved "liberal" Sens. Patrick J. Leahy, Herb Kohl, and Russell Feingold to vote for Roberts on "hope" and won the endorsement of the "liberal" Washington Post. Is there any wonder that Plessy v. Ferguson's 1896 ruling ("[I]t is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it") remains this nation's ageless judgment of racial conflict?

Yes, media pundits, the pre-Brown/Plessey justices who made the decision to provide judicial cover for legal apartheid in America were all "indisputably qualified conservative" justices who knew they were not racist, that their judgment was not racist, and that the criticism of the Blacks of their day was emotionalism.

However, Thurgood Marshall posed a caveat, with respect to Justice Clarence Thomas, as to the danger in giving unwarranted weight to identity "experience" in order to judge a favorable "empathy" in considering the justifiable need for diversity on the Supreme Court. I am concerned that Sotomayor's experience as a prosecutor and corporate lawyer may embody an "empathy" that may prove to be as hostile to the Latino-American community as Justice Thomas proved to be for the African-American community. But in that my experience is that of an African American, I will rely on the "experience" of the Latino-American community and "hope" they "reach a better conclusion" than we did.

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Sotomayor Owes No Apology



Judge Sotomayor owes no apology, writer says

The political power of this fanciful and irrational racial assault by white male pundits has actually pressured an African-American President to declare that his Latina Supreme Court nominee regrets her "choice of words." By Asa Gordon

June 1st, 2009

[National: Commentary]

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A racist does not simply "hope" to make better decisions than would another race. It is presumed that such is the case. For a racist, "a better conclusion" would not be rendered "more often than not." It would be the unavoidable outcome of racial superiority. The institutionalized racism in media reports represents the irrational bias of "white male" pundits that has prevailed over the rational "choice of words" in Sotomayor's 2001 speech. The Washington Post's selective paraphrase reads as follows: "President Obama said yesterday that Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor regrets her choice of words in a 2001 speech in which she said a "wise Latina" judge would often make better decisions than a white male."

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It is the ultimate racist and sexist mentality to insist that the white male's intellect is so superior that his racially privileged experience is no handicap in rendering justice and that there is no advantage in the experience of women and non-whites when rendering judgments on the issues of sexism or racism in our society. To the white male, any consideration of gender or racial "diversity" is reverse sexism and reverse racism.

The political power of this fanciful and irrational racial assault by white male pundits has actually pressured an African-American President to declare that his Latina Supreme Court nominee regrets her "choice of words." The controversy over the role that life experience offers to judicial insight arose a few years ago over the nomination of Supreme Court nominee John G. Roberts. The self-righteous, bi-partisan liberal and conservative media pundits rebuked veteran Civil Rights leaders John Lewis and Wade Henderson for their characterization of the "indisputably qualified conservative" Roberts as a pre- Brown v Board of Education Justice.

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Asa Gordon, Executive Director, Douglas Institute of Government Chair, DC Statehood, Green Party Electoral College Task Force